

The **Tantra Requested by Subahu** says:

*In a short span of time an enemy becomes a friend,
And a friend becomes an enemy.
Likewise, some become strangers.
While those who were strangers become enemies,
Or close friends.
Knowing this the wise never becomes attached.
Rejecting the notion that they can find happiness in friends,
They rest their minds in the pleasures of virtue.*

Reflecting on this, we should prevent the arising of attachment and resentment, which are the result of making unrealistic distinctions between friends and enemies; between "good" and "bad" people. We have a tendency to judge people based on very superficial reasons. Oftentimes we only focus on one characteristic without seeing the entire person with all their good and bad qualities; we have a "black and white" kind of view of them. Further, we are not aware of the impermanent nature of phenomena; we are not aware of ourselves, other people, situations, circumstances, etc. changing *moment by moment*. Therefore, we have a sense that those we feel attached to and those we feel resentful towards do not change and are always the same.

Also from the point of view of past and future lives, as we take constant rebirths, close relatives such as our mother and father become enemies in other lifetimes, while enemies become close relatives, etc.

The uncertainty of cyclic existence is illustrated by the following story: There was once a layman whose father liked to fish in a nearby pond. When the father died he was reborn as a fish in that same pond. The layman's mother was so attached to the family and the family house that she was reborn as her son's dog. The layman had an enemy whom he killed for having an affair with the layman's wife. Since the enemy was so attached to the wife he was reborn as her son. The layman caught his father, the fish in the pond, and killed it. While he ate its meat, his mother, the dog, stole the fish bones and was therefore beaten by her son, the layman. At the same time, his enemy, the layman's son, was sitting on his knee. One of Buddha's foremost disciples, Shariputra, who had clairvoyant powers, watched the scene and declared:

*He eats his father's flesh and hits his mother.
The enemy he killed sits on his knee.
A wife gnaws her husband's bones.
Cyclic existence can be such a farce*

Nagarjuna said in his **Friendly Letter**:

*For those in cyclic existence there are no certainties
Because fathers become sons, mothers become wives,
Enemies become friends,
And the opposite happens as well.*

The suffering of insatiability

Since our mind and body are in the nature of suffering we will not be able to find any lasting satisfaction in this existence. From a Buddhist perspective, we have been taking rebirth in cyclic existence since beginningless times. If we collected all the milk we drank from our mothers as animals or humans it would more than fill all the oceans of the world (according to ancient Indian explanations there are four oceans in this world). Furthermore, unless we make an effort to overcome our present psycho-physical aggregates we will continue to take countless rebirths.

Nagarjuna says in his **Friendly Letter**:

*Each one of us has drunk more milk
Than would fill the four oceans; yet
Those in cyclic existence who act as ordinary beings
Are intent on drinking still more than that.*

Moreover, Ashvaghosa's **Alleviating Sorrow (Soka-vinodana)** says:

*Again and again in hells
You drank boiling liquid copper –
So much that even the water in the ocean
Does not compare.*

*The filth you have eaten
As a dog and as a pig
Would make a pile far more vast
Than Mt. Meru, the king of mountains.*

*On account of losing loved ones and friends
You have shed so many tears
In the realms of cyclic existence
That the ocean could not contain them.*

*The heads that have been severed
From fighting one another,
If piled up, would
Reach beyond Brahma's heaven*

*You have been a worm
And, having been ravenous, you ate so much sludge
That if it were poured into the great ocean
It would fill it completely.*

There is not a single pleasant object in cyclic existence that we have not already enjoyed; there is not a single worldly feeling of happiness that we have not experienced. Countless times we were extremely rich, powerful, and famous, we were incredibly beautiful and handsome; we had wonderful friends, family, spouses, children, and so forth. Whatever worldly objects we wish for in this lifetime we have obtained innumerable times in past rebirths.

However, none of those were able to give us any lasting satisfaction.

We also experienced measureless pain, sorrow and misery; in fact, there is no suffering that we have not tasted. Nevertheless, despite those countless experiences of happiness and pain we still repeat the same mistakes, we are never satisfied and always crave for the same meaningless and transient objects. What a waste of time and energy!

Chandragomin says in his **Letter to a Student**:

*What realm of birth have we not come into hundreds of times?
What pleasure have we not already experienced many times before?
What luxury, such as splendid white yak-tail fans, have we not owned?
Yet, even when we possess such things, our desire continues to grow.*

*There is no suffering we have not experienced many times.
The things we desire do not satisfy us.
There is no sentient being that has not slept in our bellies.
So why do we not rid ourselves of attachment to cyclic existence.*

In the **Compendium of the Perfections** it says:

*You get what you want,
Use it up, then acquire more,
And still you are not satisfied
What could be more pathetic than this?*

The suffering of having to give up our bodies repeatedly

When we are born with a particular body we start regarding that body as "my body" and become attached to it. However, since the one thing in life that is certain is death, we have to eventually move on and leave our cherished body behind. Therefore, over the course of countless lifetimes we repeatedly experience the suffering of death - of separating from our physical aggregate.

If we piled up the bones from all the bodies we possessed in previous lives, they would form a pile whose height would exceed that of the king of mountains, Mount Meru.

Nagarjuna says in his Friendly Letter:

*Each of us has left a pile of bones
That would exceed Mount Meru.*

